

higher education. It is a global economy—the sum of U.S. imports and exports rose from 11 percent of gross domestic product in 1970 to 25 percent in 1997. This emerging economy is driven by innovation in every arena from traditional manufacturing to health care, and even farming and fishing.

The new economy is powerful and exciting, but the digital divide is real and cannot afford to be ignored. Let me describe to you what this divide looks like.

The Digital Divide:

61.6% of those with college degrees now use the Internet, while only 6.6% of those with an elementary school education or less use the Internet.

At the highest incomes (\$75,000+), the White/Black divide for computer ownership decreased by 76.2% between 1994 and 1998.

Whites are more likely to have access to the Internet from home, than Blacks or Hispanics have from any location.

Black and Hispanic households are two-fifths as likely to have home Internet access as White households.

Forty-four million American adults, roughly 22 percent, do not have the reading and writing skills necessary for functioning in everyday life. And an estimated 87 percent of documents on the Internet are in English. Yet at least 32 million Americans speak a language other than English and they are—again and again—left behind on the Internet.

Those with a college degree or higher are over eight times more likely to have a computer at home than the least educated and nearly sixteen times more likely to have home Internet access.

The “digital divide” for Internet use between those at the highest and lowest education levels widened by 25% from 1997 to 1998.

Those with college degrees or higher are ten times more likely to have Internet access at work as persons with only some high school education.

Mr. President technology is changing our world. Technology is changing our lives, how we work, and how we learn. But this is not just a new economy, it is our economy. And ours is not a newly divided society. Mr. President, this country has always been a society of haves and have nots, and so although we must respond to the unique challenges presented by the changing economy and the changing world of work, we must also understand that bridging the digital divide is about more than just computers and the Internet. In order to meet the challenge of bridging the digital divide we must assist the have nots with basic necessities, like a good public education system, a safe and clean place to live, and adequate health care. We must recognize what I hear from business leaders, teachers, students, parents—everyone—the biggest technology issue in the United

States today is education. And we need to make that connection.

Originally when we talked about technology and education—the earlier days of our awareness that there was a growing digital divide—we were focused on wiring schools and outfitting them with equipment. Now, thanks in large part to the success of the E-Rate program, which we worked hard on in the Commerce Committee and which we pushed through to passage, now technology and education is about so much more. In just a few years most of our schools have gotten on-line. And now the focus is on training teachers to effectively use the technology, to integrate technology into the classroom, and to improve parental involvement through technology.

What we can do and what we must do Mr. President, is work to harness technology to grow our economy and enlarge the winner's circle. What we can do and what we must do is work to communicate this single reality: to keep the economic growth moving ahead, we need to work together to ensure that we have a workforce and a generation of young people capable of working with the best technology and the very best ideas to raise living standards and expand the economy—and that is why we must close the digital divide.

The digital divide goes far beyond technology to encompass basic human needs. Mr. President, if we can ensure that there is a computer in every classroom—for every student—the technology will not be effectively used, learning will continue to be challenged if the child does not have a safe and secure home to go to at the end of the day. If a child attends a school that is falling apart, does it matter how many computers are in the classroom and whether or not the school is wired? If a child lives in a dangerous and violent community—a reality for far too many of this nation's young people—the fear of bullets and gangs is certain to triumph over the desire to conquer new technologies. If a child goes hungry, if school is the only place that can be counted on for a good meal, that child cannot focus on computing and learning.

Mr. President, these are the issues of the digital divide: adequate and affordable housing, safe and secure school buildings, adequate health care, qualified teachers, an increased minimum wage, strong communities, and affordable day care. We must understand that in order to seize upon this brilliant moment of technological advance and move our entire nation forward, we must address these basic needs. We must shore up the foundation, Mr. President and provide all our citizens with opportunity as we march forward in the digital age.

I ask my colleagues to ponder this for a moment: change is nothing new,

technology is nothing new, the challenge is the same as it's ever been. But we can use these new technologies to extend opportunity to more Americans than ever before—or, if we're not careful, we could allow technology to heighten economic inequality and sharpen social divisions. By the same token, we can accelerate the most powerful engine of growth and prosperity the world has ever known—or allow that engine to stall. As every economics textbook will tell you, new technologies will continue to drive economic growth—but only if they continue to spread to all sectors of our economy and civic life. And that's the challenge that faces this Congress and this nation.

Mr. President, we have a real opportunity here—and I urge my colleagues to seize it—to close the divisions within our society that have always existed and also to close the digital divide.

FAMILY OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2000

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, recently my colleagues, Senators GRASSLEY, KENNEDY, JEFFORDS, and HARKIN introduced The Family Opportunity Act of 2000. I have proudly signed on to this important piece of legislation which will help hundreds of thousands of American families who have children with disabilities get access to Medicaid as well as obtain much needed support and information.

The Family Opportunity Act is modeled after last year's successful Work Incentives Improvement Act, which assures adults with disabilities can return to work and not risk losing their health care coverage. This new Act would create a state option to allow middle-income parents who have a child with special health needs to keep working, while having an option to buy in to Medicaid coverage for their child.

In my own state of West Virginia, over 50,000 children are known to have a disability. I have heard personally from many of these families, who remind me about their daily struggles of sacrificing time, energy, and finances to provide the best environment for their child. In the past, this has meant that parents often refuse jobs, pay raises and overtime just to keep their incomes low enough so that they can qualify for services under Medicaid for their children with special health care needs.

Medicaid coverage is so crucial to the child because many private plans do not offer essential services such as occupational, physical and speech therapy, mental health services, home and community-based services, and durable medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs, which if uncovered, can be financially devastating to a family. Under the Family Opportunity Act, families would be required to first take

employer-sponsored health coverage if available. The option to buy in to Medicaid would be used as a supplement to existing private insurance or as stand alone coverage if employer-based coverage were not an option.

In addition to creating Medicaid buy-in options for families, the Family Opportunity Act proposes the establishment of Family to Family Health Information Centers. These Centers, staffed by both parents and professionals would be available to help families identify and access appropriate health care for their children with special needs, as well as answer questions on filling out the necessary paperwork to establish health care coverage.

The Family Opportunity Act promises to promote early intervention, ensures medically necessary services, offers support, and will help restore family stability. I applaud my colleagues for proposing this important legislation, but even more important, I give a standing ovation to the dedicated families who give so greatly of themselves to care for their children.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, June 15, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,644,606,868,488.81 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-four billion, six hundred and six million, eight hundred and sixty-eight thousand, four hundred eighty-eight dollars and eighty-one cents).

Last year, June 16, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,579,687,718,133.89 (Five trillion, five hundred seventy-nine billion, six hundred eighty-seven million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

Five years ago, June 16, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,893,073,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred ninety-three billion, seventy-three million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

Ten years ago, June 16, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,121,688,000,000 (Three trillion, one hundred twenty-one billion, six hundred eighty-eight million).

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORS FOR AN ARKANSAS STUDENT

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and to recognize a fellow Arkansan, Blake Rutherford, for his accomplishments at Middlebury College in Vermont. Blake is a native of Little Rock, attended Little Rock Central High School, and will be graduating from Middlebury College with a degree in Political Science in August

2000. This fine young man is the first student ever chosen at Middlebury College to give the Student Commencement Address. This is a well deserved honor for Blake Rutherford and I whole heartily congratulate him on his achievements. I ask that the text of his speech be included following my remarks.

BLAKE RUTHERFORD'S COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

Today, we are fortunate to experience one of the great accomplishments in life. Like thousands throughout America, we are gathered at the beginning of a new millennium, a unique time in our nation and in our world. But unlike thousands we have come together in a very special place—nestled between the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains—a place where we worked hard, played hard, made lifelong friends, and have spent some of the best years of our lives. Paraphrasing the legendary Bob Hope, "Middlebury: Thanks for the Memories."

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Class of 2000—individually and collectively—for your achievements. I also want to thank the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty, and staff for providing us the very best. And I especially want to thank our parents and families for paying for it.

At our centennial celebration one hundred years ago, the Middlebury Register characterized it as the "day of days for the undergraduate." Today, a century later, is most certainly our day of days and one that we will celebrate and remember forever with great pride, for as Emerson noted, "The reward of a thing well done, is to have done it."

Middlebury College began in 1800 under the direction of President Jeremiah Atwater in a small building with only seven students. As we see almost 200 hundred years later, more than 2000 students larger, under the direction of President John McCardell, much has changed.

Built for only \$8,000, Painter Hall, constructed between 1814 and 1816, is currently the oldest building on campus. Although it stands the same today, the environment and the atmosphere around it do not.

Admittance into Middlebury in 1815 used to consist of a forty-minute oral examination in Latin, Greek and arithmetic. Remembering back four years ago, I could only wish the process was as simple.

But today, thanks to the efforts of many, Middlebury is blessed with a stronger, more diverse student body than it has ever had.

We have seen the number of applicants to Middlebury grow steadily over the past four years.

We have seen the number of minorities on campus grow over the past four years.

Most importantly, we have seen Middlebury's reputation grow and spread all over the United States and to dozens of countries across the world.

Our accomplishment and our experiences have taught us a lot about ourselves and about Middlebury College. As we strive to promote a more diverse environment, we find ourselves struggling to come to terms with many difficult questions and issues. In answering these, let us turn to the lessons taught to us by three prominent Middlebury graduates.

Roswell Field graduated from Middlebury College in 1822. Upon his departure from the College, he became a lawyer, and is most famous for arguing to the Supreme Court on behalf of a slave named Dred Scott. Al-

though the Court did not rule in his favor, his case has taught us that intolerance and bigotry cannot and should not be permitted against any group, at any level.

Alexander Twilight received his Middlebury diploma in 1823, and in turn became the first African-American to receive a college degree. Today, several minority students will walk across this stage as members of the class of 2000. No doubt, Mr. Twilight would be encouraged.

Ron Brown graduated from Middlebury in 1962. Upon his arrival here, which at the time was almost all white, one campus fraternity objected, saying they only permitted "White, Christian" members. Brown and other members of his fraternity chose to fight. In time our local chapter was expelled, but because of his efforts, Middlebury, more importantly, made it college policy that no exclusionary chapters would exist on campus.

Ron Brown had an exemplary professional career serving as Secretary of Commerce until his death in a tragic plane crash in 1996. Jesse Jackson once said of him, "He learned to be a bridge between the cultures." I hope we all can remember that lesson here today. A lesson, no doubt, Ron Brown learned at Middlebury College.

We've come a long way since these individuals were here, but we still have a long way to go.

I am a son of the South. I came a far distance to go to school here. Acceptance to Middlebury was my own impossible dream.

I graduated from Little Rock Central High School where 43 years ago nine African-American students were denied admittance prompting a constitutional crisis our nation had not seen since the Civil War.

While much progress has been made, today in parts of the Mississippi Delta region of our own country—just a couple of hours from my home—there is poverty at its very worst.

Several years ago the late Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois was speaking at a ceremony at the Gettysburg Battlefield where he said, "Men died here and men are sleeping here who fought under a July sun that the nation might endure: united, free, tolerant, and devoted to equality. The task was unfinished. It is never quite finished."

He was right. It is never quite finished.

With our Middlebury foundation, we're now going to embark on a world full of many wonderful opportunities and also of many grave problems. If we can remember two important lessons, our lives and certainly our world will be a much better place. First, the future can always be better than the present. And second, we have a responsibility to ensure that that is the case. It is a responsibility we have to ourselves, to our communities, to Middlebury and most importantly to those who are not as fortunate to be here, among us, today.

This afternoon we leave Middlebury with a greater knowledge of various academic fields, the world and ourselves. We also leave Middlebury young and energetic, bound closer to one another more than we probably ever will be through our friendships, our relationships, and our experiences. And with that we now have the opportunity to help and serve others.

Robert Kennedy said, "This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite of adventure over the love of ease."

Today, we make history as the first graduating class of Middlebury's third century. It is an accomplishment that I'm sure makes